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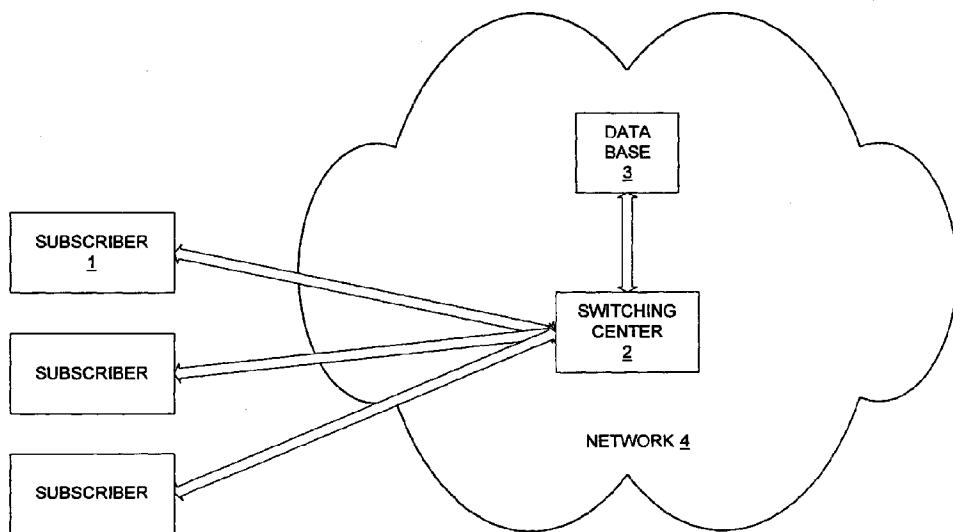
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(54) Title: PRIORITIZATION OF SUBSCRIBERS IN A SWITCHING CENTER OF A TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEM



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(57) Abstract: A switching method and a network element (2) applying this method are disclosed in which priorities are assigned to subscriber categories, subscriber categories of same priority are combined into a subscriber group and resources are reserved for each subscriber group. When a resource usage request in connection with a subscriber connection request is received from a subscriber (1), the subscriber group is determined to which the subscriber (1) belongs and a resource for the subscriber (1) is allocated out of the reserved resources for this subscriber group.



For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

PRIORITIZATION OF SUBSCRIBERS IN A SWITCHING CENTER OF A TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEM

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

Prioritization of subscribers in switching center.

5 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a method for switching subscribers connecting to a switching apparatus providing services for the connected subscribers.

10

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In a PLMN (Public Land Mobile Network) like GSM (Global System for Mobile Communication) subscribers connect to the 15 network through a switching center like MSC (Mobile-services Switching Center). The switching center acts as an exchange with some modifications specifically required to handle the mobile application. The switching center communicates with a data base like VLR (Visitor Location 20 Register) which stores subscriber data and provides dynamic subscriber data management.

1

The switching center and the data base provide mobile service for the subscribers. Moreover, the switching center 25 provides interworking function for the subscribers which is needed for speech and non-speech connections to external networks.

2

The subscribers connecting to the switching center may be 30 classified according to different categories. For example, these categories comprise business, normal and telemetric categories.

When the data base capacity increases so that data of more 35 subscribers are present than subscribers can be handled by

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the switching center communicating with the data base, the switching center cannot perform all its functions without overloading.

5 In case of such an overload situation, the service for the subscribers connecting to the overloaded switching center is decreased. For example, when a subscriber of the business category connects to the overloaded switching center this subscriber may not be handled by the switching
10 center anymore, although a subscriber of the telemetric category which has connected to the switching center just before the business subscriber is handled.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

15 It is therefore an object of the present invention to ensure service for subscribers belonging to a certain category. In addition, the service should be provided even in switching center overload situation.

20 This object is achieved by a switching method comprising the steps of:
25 assigning priorities to subscriber categories;
combining subscriber categories of same priority into a subscriber group;
reserving resources for each subscriber group;
receiving a resource usage request in connection with a subscriber connection request from a subscriber;
determining the subscriber group to which the
30 subscriber belongs; and
allocating a resource for the subscriber out of the reserved resources for this subscriber group.

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Moreover, this object is achieved by a network element for providing services for subscribers connecting thereto, the network element applying the above-mentioned method.

5 When the data base capacity (VLR capacity in GSM) is enlarged, switching center overload situations may become more frequent. According to the present invention, users can be prioritized and acceptable service levels for users with high priority can be ensured also in switching center 10 overload situations.

Further features of the present invention are defined in the dependent claims.

15 In the following the present invention will be described by way of a preferred embodiment thereof with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

20 Fig. 1 shows a schematic block diagram of a system comprising a switching center according to the present invention.

25 Fig. 2 shows a flowchart of an operation of the switching center according to the present invention. []

30 Fig. 3 shows a flowchart of a more detailed operation of [] the switching center when allocating a resource for a subscriber. []

Fig. 4 shows a schematic diagram of a resource allocation of a switching center according to the present invention.

35 DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

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Fig. 1 shows a system in which a subscriber 1 like a user of a mobile station connects to a network 4 through a switching center 2. As illustrated in Fig. 1, a plurality 5 of subscribers can connect to the switching center 2.

The switching center 2 communicates with a data base 3 which stores data of subscribers connected to the switching center 2.

10

According to the present invention, the switching center 2 is able to perform ticketing, i.e. allocates resources for subscribers connecting to the switching center 2 which will be described in connection with Fig. 2.

15

In advance, the switching center 2 assigns a priority to each subscriber category used. As it is shown in Fig. 4, there may be a business category, a normal category and a telemetric category. According to the preferred embodiment, 20 the switching center 2 gives the business category a high priority and the normal and telemetric categories a low priority (step S1 in Fig. 2). Then the switching center 2 groups together the categories having the same priority. That is, the business category forms a subscriber group 25 having high priority and the normal and telemetric categories form a subscriber group having low priority (step S2).

As can be seen from Fig. 4, there is a subscriber queue 30 belonging to the business category having high priority, and there are subscriber queues belonging to the normal and telemetric categories having low priority. In other words, there are two subscriber groups and three subscriber categories.

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After that, the switching center 2 reserves resources for each subscriber group (step S3). The switching center 2 may for example reserve 60% of its resources for the group with high priority and the remaining 40% for the group with low priority.

In case the switching center 2 receives a resource usage request from a subscriber 1 in connection with a subscriber connection request (step S4), it checks to which category or subscriber group the subscriber 1 belongs (step S5).

After having determined the group, the switching center 2 allocates a resource out of the resources reserved for the determined subscriber group for the subscriber 1 (step S6).

The allocation of resources according to the preferred embodiment will be described in more detail with reference to Fig. 3. During a connection request, there can be several resource usage requests, and the connection setup fails if any of them fails. Hence, the operation of Fig. 3 may be applied several times during a connection setup.

When allocating a resource for the connecting subscriber 1, the switching center 2 first checks whether a resource for the determined subscriber group still is available (step S61 in Fig. 3). If YES in step S61, the switching center 2 allocates the resource for the subscriber 1.

When the switching center 2 detects in step S61 that no resource is available for the determined subscriber group to which the subscriber 1 belongs, or when it detects that more than a specific amount of resources, for example 95% of the resources, are in use, the switching center 2 checks in step S63 whether the determined subscriber group is a high priority group. If the switching center 2 detects in step S63 that the subscriber 1 belongs to a high priority

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group, i.e. the business category group according to the preferred embodiment, it advances to step S64 in Fig. 3.

In step S64 the switching center checks whether a resource reserved for a subscriber group having low priority is available. According to the preferred embodiment, the switching center 2 checks in step S64 whether a resource reserved for the normal and telemetric categories is available.

10

If YES in step S64, the switching center 2 allocates a resource out of the resources reserved for the low priority group for the subscriber 1 belonging to the high priority group (step S65).

15

As it is shown in Fig. 4, if the resources for the business category group subscribers are low, resources may be taken from the telemetric and normal subscriber group.

20 According to the present invention, subscribers are classified with respect to their category. To be precise, priorities are assigned to the different subscriber categories and categories with the same priority are grouped together. According to the preferred embodiment of
25 the present invention, there are two groups, a high priority group comprising the business category and a low priority group comprising the normal and telemetric categories.

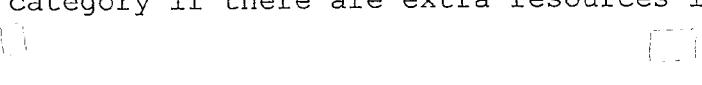
30 However, the present invention is not restricted to two groups and there can be one group for each category. According to Fig. 4, there may be a further dotted line between the normal and telemetric categories, forming three subscriber groups. Then, in case resources for the normal
35 category group subscribers are running out, resources can

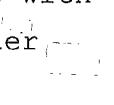
- 7 -

be taken from the telemetric subscriber category group. Furthermore, a top priority group for emergency calls and the like can be introduced.

- 5 Furthermore, according to the preferred embodiment, the resources of the switching center 2 are divided between the groups. Preferably, the high priority group has the biggest part of resources reserved.
- 10 In an overload situation when the resources reserved for high or higher priority subscribers have run out, some resources out of the resources reserved for the low or lower priority groups can be reallocated for the high or higher priority groups.

15

The resource reservation for each subscriber group can also be made dynamically during operation. Moreover, priorities may be assigned dynamically to the subscriber categories during operation. According to Fig. 4, when the normal subscriber category is given the same priority as the business subscriber category, the dotted line in Fig. 4 moves down, thus forming a business and normal subscriber group and a telemetric subscriber group, and it becomes possible that a normal subscriber gets resources also from the business category if there are extra resources in this category. 

According to the present invention, users can be prioritized and acceptable service levels for users with high priority can be ensured also in switching center  overload situations.

The present invention is not limited to a specific switching technology and is also applicable in packet switched networks like IP (Internet Protocol) networks.

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Thus, also the term switching is not limited to conventional switching performed in circuit switched networks, but it is to be interpreted broadly, i.e. including also the switching done e.g. in all IP networks,
5 so that, in some cases, it could also be called routing.

While the invention has been described with reference to a preferred embodiment, the description is illustrative of the invention and is not to be construed as limiting the
10 invention. Various modifications and applications may occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A switching method comprising the steps of:
 - assigning (S1) priorities to subscriber categories;
 - 5 combining (S2) subscriber categories of same priority into a subscriber group;
 - reserving (S3) resources for each subscriber group;
 - receiving (S4) a resource usage request in connection with a subscriber connection request from a subscriber (1);
 - 10 determining (S5) the subscriber group to which the subscriber (1) belongs; and
 - allocating (S6) a resource for the subscriber (1) out of the reserved resources for this subscriber group.
- 15 2. The method according to claim 1, wherein a predetermined amount of resources is reserved for each subscriber group.
3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the predetermined amount of reserved resources for a subscriber 20 group with a high priority is higher than the predetermined amount of reserved resources for a subscriber group with a low priority.
4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the resources 25 for each subscriber group are reserved dynamically during operation. []
5. The method according to claim 1, wherein in case that reserved resources for a high priority subscriber group 30 reach a specific limit, resources out of reserved resources for a low priority subscriber group are allocated for a high priority group subscriber.

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6. The method according to claim 1, wherein the priorities are assigned to the subscriber categories dynamically during operation.
- 5 7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the subscribers are subscribers in a packet switched telecommunication system.
- 10 8. A network element (2) for providing services for subscribers (1) connecting to the network element (2) applying the method according to one of claims 1 to 7.
- 15 9. The network element according to claim 8, wherein the network element is an element responsible of call control or switching of connections.
10. The network element according to claim 8, wherein the network element is part of a packet switched telecommunication system.

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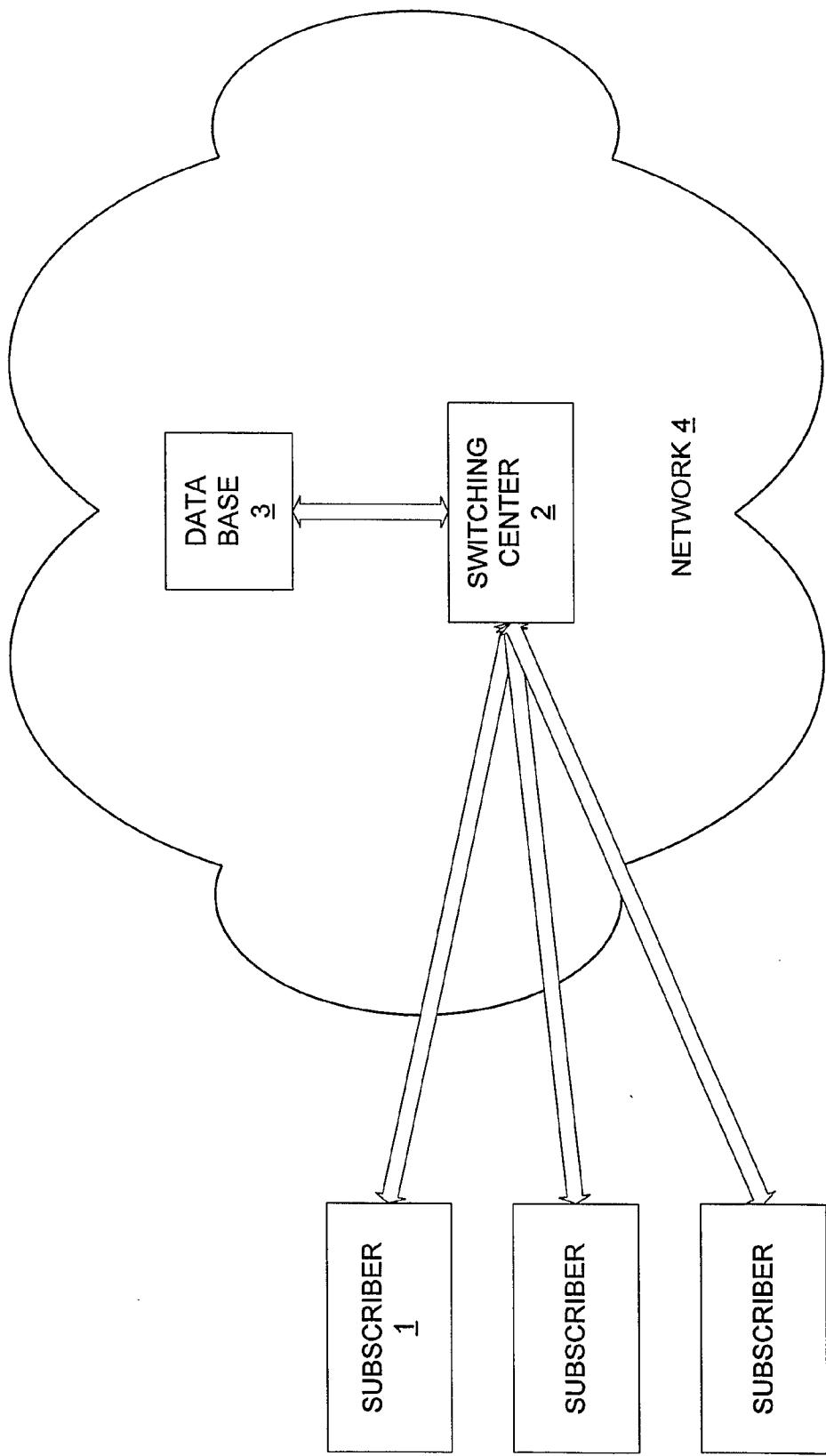


FIG. 1

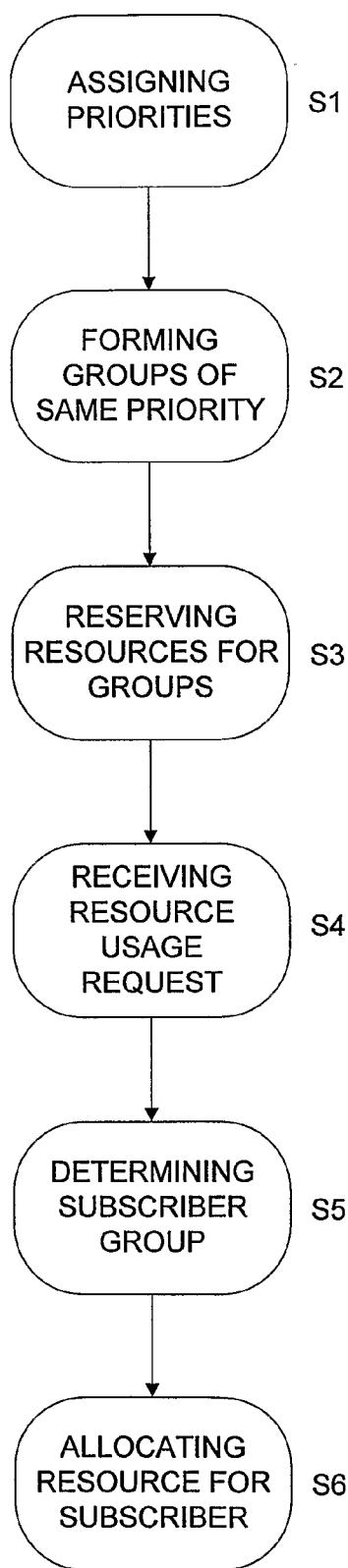
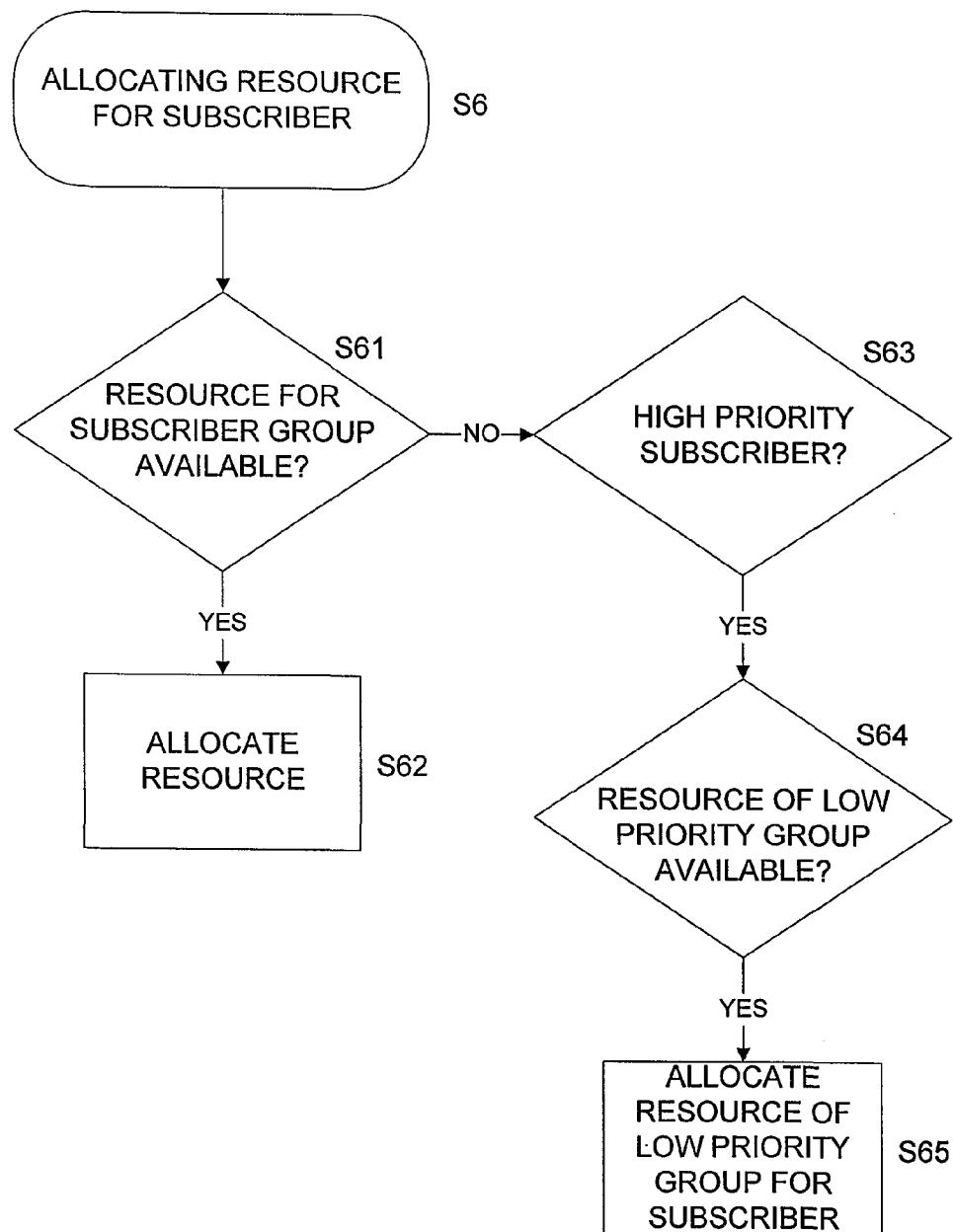


FIG. 2

**FIG. 3**

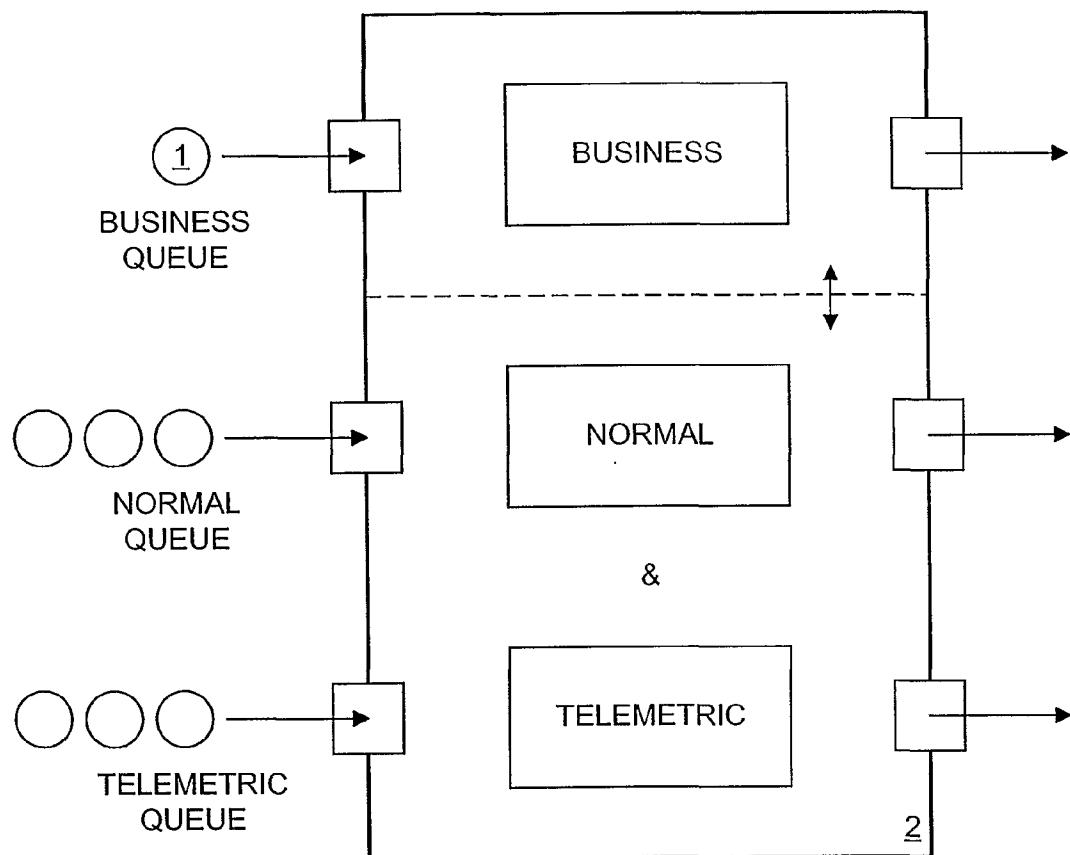


Fig. 4

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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| Int'l Application No |
| PCT/EP 00/06115 |

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| A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER |
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According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

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| B. FIELDS SEARCHED |
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Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 H04L H04Q

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, INSPEC

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| C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT |
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| Category | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
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Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

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Information on patent family members

Initial Application No
PCT/EP 00/06115

| Patent document cited in search report | Publication date | Patent family member(s) | | Publication date |
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